

1. How do you feel about the state of the current Medicaid bill?

**It needs to pass. Everyone acknowledges that Medicaid needs reform and this bill does that.**

2. What has your office specifically done to ensure that elderly Mississippians get the health care they need?

**We sounded the call last year that Medicaid was not sustainable in its present form. Many legislators now agree with this and that Medicaid must be reformed. Saving Medicaid from going broke is the best thing we can do for Mississippi's elderly, and we have led in that department.**

3. Mississippi has also faced problems regarding doctors and malpractice premiums. Mississippi constantly ranks as one of the most obese states in the nation. Do you feel the state of Mississippi's health care system is adequate, and what can be done to improve it?

**Most doctors will tell you that Mississippi's health care system was helped by the tort reform law we passed last year. Many doctors are seeing level and, in some cases, declining insurance costs for the first time in years. This means more doctors are staying in Mississippi - particularly in rural areas where there has been doctor shortages and people had to travel long distances for emergency health care.**

4. P.L.A.D.S. programs, programs specifically designated for the poor and the aged in the state are not funded in the current Medicaid bill according to my research. Is this true?

**The PLAD program is funded until the end of 2005 in the current Medicaid bill being considered in the Legislature. In 2006, PLAD recipients will receive coverage through the new federal Medicare prescription drug program.**

5. The most important message I take from the Bible is "Love thy neighbor as thyself." As a Christian do you feel funding programs like Medicaid is a Christian duty?

**Caring for the needy is the most important part of Medicaid, and why I have included funding increases for Medicaid in my budget.**

6. Does Governor Barbor have a family member that could be affected by the Medicaid crisis?

**I know many people on Medicaid and talk to them frequently. I have tried to keep them updated on work at the Capitol to fix the program.**

7. In an interview with one Senator this morning, he said he felt less government oversight was the answer to the Medicaid crisis with churches and local communities stepping in to help. Do you agree with this assesment?

**Faith-based and community organization already do so much to care for Mississippi's needy and in most cases do a much better job than the government because they care for physical needs and spiritual needs. Medicaid will always be part of the poverty solution, but it cannot match the warmth and compassion of a congregation or a neighbor.**

8. I wrote a story last week about a House bill to allow the display of

the Ten Commandments in the public school. Much of the feedback saw this bill as unimportant, given crisis the state is facing such as Medicaid. Do you feel the bill to allow the 10 commandments in public schools is important?

**State government can do both. We were solving Medicaid's deficit problem at the same time a bill was being considered to allow the displaying of the Ten Commandments. I have made clear that saving Medicaid is critical for the health care of 780,000 Mississippians. I also believe displaying the Ten Commandments should be encouraged and not discouraged in Mississippi. I have the Ten Commandments displayed in my office at the Capitol, and I see nothing wrong with that.**

9. Sister Donna Gunn spoke of a poll, which I am attempting to locate and verify within the state that showed support for a 50 cent tax on cigarettes as high as 80 percent for people living in the state. . Do you have any comments on Mississippians supporting this fiscal measure that would add to the State's revenue?

**Reputable polls have not shown such support, but I don't think Mississippians want their leaders to govern by polls anyway. The bottom line is that raising taxes is the wrong way to fix Mississippi's fiscal crisis. We need to control spending to rebase our budget for the future. It doesn't matter if the tax is on smokers or somebody else, taxpayers are not at fault for the state's budget mess and should not be penalized for state government's out-of-control spending in recent years.**